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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OCI NO. 3196/62

MEMORANDUM: Soviet Statement on Cuba 12 September 1962

1. Moscow's statement of 11 September on Cuba appears to be designed to further a variety of Soviet objectives, foremost among them being to deter the US from active intervention in Cuba.

2. The statement does not significantly alter the nature of the USSR's commitment to defend the Castro regime. The Soviets have once again used deliberately vague and ambiguous language to avoid a clear cut obligation of military support for Cuba in the event of an American invasion. They carefully refrain from spelling out their precise reactions to any attack on Cuba. In some respects, the statement is less specific than previous Soviet warnings, such as that contained in Khrushchev's letter of 18 April 1961 to President Kennedy. As before, however, Moscow attempts to create the impression that Cuba is under the protection of the full range of Soviet nuclear and missile power. The statement is also calculated to enable the USSR to claim full credit for having protected Cuba if no U.S. invasion or interference with Soviet shipping materializes.

3. The statement displays great sensitivity to the implications of the President's request for authorization to call up reserves. The Soviets probably felt that they had no choice but to respond with a strong statement of their support for Castro. Thus, while avoiding a definite commitment to defend Cuba, Moscow has further engaged its prestige in ensuring the survival of the Cuban Government.

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4. In addition to its deterrent effect, the Soviet statement is intended to check growing alarm in the US and Latin America over Soviet intentions in Cuba. It stresses the defensive nature of Soviet military equipment being furnished the Cubans and implicitly denies any Soviet intention to establish military bases in Cuba. The statement, moreover, conveys an indirect assurance that Moscow will not confront the US with simultaneous challenges in both Cuba and Berlin.

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5. At the same time, however, Moscow strongly advances the argument that the USSR has a right to provide military assistance to Cuba, citing the existence of US military alliances and bases on the periphery of the Sino-Soviet bloc and the presence of American fleets in the Mediterranean and the Taiwan Strait. The statement reflects the Soviet leaders' long-standing desire to "settle old accounts" with the US by establishing a military and political presence close to the US in an area which traditionally has been an American sphere of influence. Moscow's policy toward Cuba has been strongly influenced by this desire to establish the USSR's claim to great power equality with the US.

6. The statement can be characterized as brusque and strong regarding Cuba but moderate on Berlin. We anticipate that the Soviets will launch a strong attack on US policy at the UN, and we think that they recognize that these tactics will rule out any progress in the Berlin talks for the time being. The statement tacitly acknowledges this by noting that a "pause now has been reached" in these talks and by observing that it is "difficult" for the US to negotiate during an election campaign. It reiterates the usual line that the USSR favors the "earliest conclusion" of a German peace treaty and a Berlin settlement.

7. The Soviet leaders probably do not wish to break off diplomatic contacts altogether and envisage a resumption of high level talks on Berlin late this year or early next year. They may feel that, in the meantime, propaganda denunciations of U.S. "aggressive actions" will enable them to further delay a separate peace treaty with East Germany without appearing to retreat. Such a delay would permit them to assess the impact on the West's negotiating position of this offensive as well as of probable maneuvers on their part to involve the UN in a Berlin settlement.

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